

Masonic Temple
1111-19 11th Street
Intown Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5518

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
109-

PHOTOGRAPHS
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MASONIC TEMPLE

HABS No. PA-5518

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PA.
7-ALTO.
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Location: 1111-19 11th St., Altoona, Blair County, Pa.

Present Owner: Maurice and Mary Lou Lawruk, 319A East Plank Road, Altoona, Pa., 16602.

Present Use: The first floor contains two stores. The second, third, and fourth floors are vacant.

Significance: The Masonic Temple is one of Altoona's few remaining large red-brick buildings from the nineteenth century. Designed by Philadelphia architect James H. Windrim, the temple's interesting exterior is complemented by a well-organized interior that is in virtually unaltered condition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1889-90. The cornerstone was laid August 13, 1889. The building was dedicated May 20, 1890.
2. Architect: James H. Windrim of Philadelphia was the architect. George H. Smith of the firm Smith and Robinson, Altoona, supervised the construction. A handwritten note on the drawings concerning the dimensions of the windows was signed by Charles Marks, who was probably Windrim's project manager in Philadelphia.

James H. Windrim (1840-1919) achieved great fame when, at age 27, he won the competition for Philadelphia's Masonic Temple. Constructed according to his design from 1868-73, the temple, which cost more than \$1 million, was the first large public building on Penn Square. Windrim went on to design numerous other buildings in Philadelphia and other eastern cities before being named Supervising Architect of the Treasury in 1889 (shortly after designing this building), where he was responsible for all federal construction. He held this post until 1891, when he moved back to Philadelphia to become Director of Public Works for the city until 1895. He then returned to private practice. Windrim was an active Mason, first joining a Pittsburgh lodge in 1864, then Philadelphia Lodge No. 72, of which he was Worshipful Master in 1873. (Poppeliers, 1962, 4-18.)

3. Original and subsequent owners: In 1989 the Masons sold it to the present owner.
4. Contractor, suppliers:

Contractor: Henry Shank, of Erie, Pa.

Cut stone work: Finn and Welsh.

Painting, glazing, etc.: S. M. Griffith.

Tin work: Eaby & Son.

Plumbing and gas fitting: George Stone.

Furniture: George Jackson, dealer; manufactured by A. B. and E. L. Shaw, Boston.

Carpet: Wm. Murray and Son, through Wooster Manufacturing Co.

Guerney Hot Water System: Installed by Reinecke & Co., Pittsburgh.

Pavement: Wehn Paving Co., Philadelphia and New York.

(Altoona Tribune [May 22, 1890])

MASONIC TEMPLE
HABS No. PA-5518 (Page 2)

5. Original plans and construction: The temple was designed to house commercial activities on the first and second floors and Masonic activities on the third and fourth. This division is reinforced on the interior by separate stairways, so that the public would not wander upstairs. The different uses are marked on the exterior by an elaborate stringcourse. Except for the stores on the first floor, most of the original plan remains.
6. Alterations and additions: In 1925-26, an addition was planned but not built. Hersh and Shollar, architects of Altoona, drew up plans to double the size of the present building by adding a 50'-wide section along the entire rear wall. Although the new section contained six stories, it was the same height as the original. The new plan put an elevator core behind the stairs and put a new corridor on the cross axis.

In 1953, the tower and the spires on the tourelles above the cornice were removed. Also, the glass-block windows were installed. The storefronts have received many changes over the years.

B. Historical Context:

The Mountain Lodge No. 281, Free and Accepted Masons, was founded in December 1853, when Altoona was barely 4 years old. The lodge first met in Patton's Hall. On November 14, 1854, the lodge purchased the Presbyterian Church at 12th Avenue and 13th Street, but six months later the building was destroyed by fire. In 1857 the Masons bought Campbell Hotel on 12th Street; they added a third story and moved in in February 1857. They stayed at this site until the new temple was built.

Laying the cornerstone for the new temple was an important event. Occurring on August 20, 1889, it was attended by the Right Worshipful Deputy Grandmaster, J. Simpson Africa (a well-known local historian), and Brother A. M. Lloyd of Lodge No. 282 of Hollidaysburg, for many years the District Deputy Grandmaster who had been present at the founding of Lodge No. 281 in 1853. Among other items deposited in the cornerstone were all of the local newspapers of the day, as well as newspapers describing the Johnstown Flood, which had occurred just three months earlier.

The building was dedicated on May 20, 1890. The temple included rooms for the Mountain Lodge No. 281 as well as for smaller lodges, such as Logan Lodge No. 490, founded in 1871. At the dedication, the newspaper noted that the bigger building was needed "not only for the better convenience and comfort of the fraternity, but that would be conspicuous among the ornamental public structures in the city of Altoona."

According to a lodge history, the lodge had invested in building and loan associations, which provided a good return on the investment. Construction of the temple cost \$84,000, including the land. The Masons soon bought the adjoining lot for \$17,000, and built a small stable there.

The Masons built a new temple, along Pleasant Valley Boulevard east of intown Altoona, in 1984-85. In it they replicated the exact dimensions of the Grand Lodge Room, and reinstalled all of the original furniture. In addition, the three stained-glass windows from the second floor landing were removed from the old temple and placed in storage there. A drawing of Windrim's Masonic Temple in Philadelphia is also displayed in the new Banqueting Hall.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Architectural Character:

MASONIC TEMPLE
HABS No. PA-5518 (Page 3)

1. General Statement: The massiveness of this red brick building is broken by a lively design which incorporates gables and towers to add verticality to the building's low, rectangular massing.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures approximately 120' x 50' x 70' to the roof. It was 107' to the top of the steeple.
2. Foundations: Not visible.
3. Walls: Philadelphia red pressed brick laid in stretcher bond. At the first floor, there are rusticated stone piers at the corners and flanking the entrance. There are also rusticated stone lintels over the third-floor windows. The second story is separated from the third by a stringcourse, separating the public functions of the building from the temple. The third and fourth stories are arranged in seven bays. The two bays at each end are identical; the three center bays are separated by tourelles, and each bay has a different composition. Ornament includes the name "MASONIC TEMPLE" in galvanized iron over the entrance, and the date stone ("A.1889.D") in the center between the third and fourth floors.
4. Structural system: The building has brick bearing walls. Columns on the first and second floors support wood joists. The 46'-wide open space on the third floor is achieved by 4'-deep plate girders, identified as iron, which are 3/8" thick, spaced 8' apart. The roof above the fourth floor is constructed of a king-post truss with timber beams and wrought iron-tension rods.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance, in the center of the facade, is recessed from the exterior wall, creating a vestibule. Behind a set of iron gates, since removed, was another small vestibule, then the wood double doors.
 - b. Windows: The first-floor windows are all modern storefronts. At the second floor, the windows have paired, one-over-one-light flat-arched sash. At the third floor, the windows are 12' high with one-over-one-light sash. On the fourth floor, the windows have round-arched, one-over-one-light sash. On both the third and fourth floors, all of the windows in the 12th Avenue end of the building, on three sides, have been replaced by glass block.

All the windows lighting the stairway in the rear facade were ornamented. The window between the first and second floors was described in 1890: "At the head of the first landing is a wide French plate-glass window with stained glass in the upper sashes, the emblems of the order showing off in the latter to good effect." (Altoona Tribune, [May 22, 1890])

6. Roof:
 - a. Shape: Low hipped roof.
 - b. Cornice: Galvanized iron in a modillion-like design

MASONIC TEMPLE
HABS No. PA-5518 (Page 4)

- c. Steeple: The steeple, which has been removed, consisted of a 12'-high brick portion, about 15' square, topped by a 32'-high pyramidal roof. It was located near the front of the building, above the third bay from the 11th Avenue end.
Two gables rise above the cornice, one on the 12th Avenue end and one on the front, above the third bay from the 12th Avenue end.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First: Originally, the first floor had six stores, "of good depth and bandsomely lighted, the windows being of French plate glass." These have been replaced by three stores with modern storefronts. The floor-to-ceiling height is 13'-6".
- b. Second: A center hall running longitudinally is lit by windows at either end. Offices open off the hall; there are seven along the front of the building and five along the rear. The floor-to-ceiling height is 12'-6".
- c. Third: The Grand Lodge Room on the 12th Avenue end measures 68'-4" x 46'-0" and has raised platforms on four sides. There is also a Smaller Lodge Room measuring 22'-0" x 36'-3" on the 11th Avenue end, and other anterooms in between. The floor-to-ceiling height is 16'.
- d. Fourth: The Banqueting Hall and Drill Room on the 12th Avenue end measures 46'-8" x 79'-2". Opposite is a smaller room, the Armory, with an anteroom. In the middle is the kitchen, with a pantry leading to the Banqueting Hall. The floor-to-ceiling height is 14'.

- 2. Stairway: The stairway between the first and second floors is located opposite the entrance. It runs in two directions with a landing along the rear wall. At the upper floors the stairway is located closer to the 11th Avenue end. The stairway has handsome newel posts and turned balusters on all floors. It has been enclosed by fire walls on the second, third, and fourth floors.
- 3. Flooring: Pine. The landings and stairs were originally covered with linoleum "of a neat and attractive pattern." The lodge rooms on the third floor originally had Brussels carpets.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The outer vestibule has a glazed-tile wainscot. The inner vestibule, stairway, and second-floor hall have wainscots of vertical beaded boards and pressed-metal ceilings. On the third floor, the Grand Lodge Room walls were painted green with a 2'-high stenciled gold frieze. The Smaller Lodge Room had brown walls with stenciled Masonic emblems. The third-floor ceiling had "beautifully decorated iron panels," since removed; it now has panels between the beams, and scrolled brackets at the walls. The fourth floor has a pressed-metal ceiling.
- 5. Openings: Most of the interior doors have five rectangular panels. The second-floor doors are topped by large square transom windows with bull's-eye corner blocks. The third-floor doors have no transom windows, while the fourth-floor doors do. Many of the windows have interior panelled shutters.
- 6. Furniture: The furniture in the Grand Lodge Room was "of massive mahogany upholstered with exquisite silk velvet, and the chairs and pedestals represent three classes of architecture--Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian." In the Smaller Lodge Room there was "quartered oak furniture,

MASONIC TEMPLE
HABS No. PA-5518 (Page 5)

upholstered with blue silk mohair plush." All of the furniture has been removed.

7. Mechanical systems:

- a. Heating: The building was equipped with a Guernsey Hot Water System, evidence of which may be seen in the radiator pipes which run around the Banqueting Hall, as well as other rooms.
- h. Lighting: The building was equipped with both gas and electric lighting. In the Grand Lodge Room, "Six chandeliers fitted for five gas burners and four electric lights each are suspended from the ceiling, and on the side walls are brackets for two gas and two electric lights." In the Smaller Lodge Room were "two handsome brass chandeliers fitted for gas and electricity." In the Banqueting Hall were "six four-light brass chandeliers."
- c. Cooking: The original stove, equipped with fifteen gas burners, remains in the kitchen.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces northeast on 11th Street, running from Green Avenue to 12th Avenue. Green Avenue was not cut through until the 1960s; originally there was an alley on that end of the building.
2. Outbuildings: There was apparently a stable located on the lot next door on 12th Avenue, owned by the Masons, but it has been demolished.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: Several blueprints of original drawings are located in the building. These include fourteen drawings signed by Windrim (1889); eleven signed by Hersh and Shollar (1925-26); and one of an undated storefront.

B. Early views:

1. Art Work of Blair County (Chicago: The W. H. Parish Publishing Co., 1893), includes two photographs, one of the Masonic Temple itself, and one of the Opera House Block with the Masonic Temple in the background.
2. The Altoona Mirror library, Historical Cuts collection, has two relatively unknown photographs of the Masonic Temple. One, ca. 1890, shows the completed 12th Avenue facade and a second, taken shortly thereafter, shows the unaltered storefronts and the tower.
3. An original line drawing of the building is reproduced in the commemorative program for the dedication of the new Masonic Temple, June 29, 1985.
4. Charles B. Clark's Semi-Centennial History of Blair County (Altoona: Privately printed, 1896), contains a photograph of the building.
5. James S. Kasun, 305 Coleridge Ave., Altoona, has a 1940s photograph of the vitrolite facade of the Young Men's Shop, which was located at 1113 Green Ave. from 1942 until 1973. This

photograph also shows some original decorative details that have since been removed from the temple.

- C. Interviews: Lloyd Murray, former Worshipful Master of Mountain Lodge No. 281, interview with Alison K. Hoagland, July 6, 1988; interview with K. Edward Lay and Doug Anderson, July 17, 1989.
- D. Bibliography:
1. Primary sources: The archives of Mountain Lodge No. 281 contains several items of interest, including:
 - a. A letter from the Committee on Arrangements to the Worshipful Master, Wardens and Brethrens of Mountain Lodge No. 281, August 20, 1889, describing the cornerstone-laying ceremony.
 - b. Newspapers found in the cornerstone, which the lodge opened when they left the temple.
 - c. "A Fiftieth Anniversary History of the Lodge," in manuscript form, no author.
 2. Secondary sources:

"The Temple Dedicated," Altoona Tribune (May 22, 1890).

Poppeliers, John. "James Hamilton Windrim," seminar paper, University of Pennsylvania, 1962.

_____. "The 1867 Philadelphia Masonic Temple Competition," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 26 (December 1967): 278-284.

_____. "James H. Windrim," in MacMillan Encyclopedia of Architects, Adolf K. Placzek, ed. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. An overview of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and an overview of the downtown (HABS No. PA-5789) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Alison K. Hoagland and augmented by Nancy Spiegel in the summer of 1989. Hoagland's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace and Sara Amy Leach.

CAD/Photogrammetry

Since the 1950s, HABS and HAER have used the proven technology of glass plate stereophotogrammetry to produce measured drawings, although infrequently because of the expense. Rollei developed a new photogrammetric system in the mid-1980s that used convergent film images produced by semi-metric cameras and computer software with mathematical algorithms that extracted dimensions from the images by digitizing from photographic enlargements. The inherent flexibility of the film was offset by a reseau grid (a pattern of cross hairs) superimposed on each negative. The output from the system was digital computer files that could be recognized by computer-aided-drafting (CAD) programs such as AutoCAD. A major advantage of the new system was that the system was significantly less expensive than traditional glass-plate stereophotogrammetry.

HABS/HAER leased the Rollei version of this CAD/photogrammetry system, including a Rolleimetric 6006 camera, in 1989 to demonstrate its capability to produce HABS/HAER documentation. The Dudley House and Masonic Temple in Altoona were among the structures recorded. They were selected because they were the focus of a traditional hand-measured drawings project and could serve as a basis of comparison for accuracy and cost. The experiments proved the viability of the system in meeting HABS/HAER standards for measured drawings, although the Rolleimetric 6006 camera produced negatives too small ($2\frac{1}{4}" \times 2\frac{1}{4}"$) to meet the HABS/HAER standard for large format photography.

John A. Burns was the project leader for the CAD/photogrammetry demonstration project. The Altoona recording was carried out with the support of the HABS summer team.

ADDENDUM TO:
MASONIC TEMPLE
1111-1119 Eleventh Street
Altoona
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PA, 7-ALTO, 109-

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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